



PADDY CULTIVATION AND PREPARATIONS IN MEDIEVAL ANDHRADESA

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INTRODUCTION:

Rice is the staple food of the South Indians. It is the main product of Paddy, a commercial crop. In Telugu Paddy is generally called *Dhanya*, *Vari* and *Biyyam* respectively. In Sanskrit they are called *Dhan*, *Chawal* and *Sadha* or *Anna* respectively. Rice occupies the first place as the best of the food articles. The recent discoveries of the German scientists, *vari* or rice was cultivated first by the people of Andhradesa and the word *vari* is a source for Sanskrit derivation of *vrichi*. Amongst the donations many donors preferred to give away *Nivartanas* of *Sali* and *vadlu*. Literature has much to speak about the preparations of rice relatively modern account can be found in *Hamsavimsati*, which discusses fifty six types of paddy.¹ Warangal was known for the cultivation of a superior quality of rice known as *karpura* – *rajanalu*. The first word *karpura* indicates that the rice was fragrant when cooked and it was considered as king of all varieties of paddy as its name *rajanalu* indicates. Both the indigenous and foreign works refer to this variety of rice.

The literary sources especially *Bhimeswara Puranam*, *Amuktamalyada*, *Hamsavimsati* and *Sukasaptati* refer to various kinds of Paddy. According to *Amuktamalyada* they are *tigemmalalelu*, *kharjuramulu*, *puspamajarulu*, *mamidiguttulu*, *kusmalu*, *sampegodu*, *paccagannerulu*, *rajanamulu*, *kantidaramulu* etc.² *Hamsavimsati* enlists more than fifty varieties of Paddy. They are *bangaru tigalu*, *ganga-jalamulu*, *kasturi nigaralu*, *katakasaru*, *ippapurajanalu*, *enugukommulu*, *mallesrigandhulu*, *madanagandhulu*, *elikaaranalu*, *iswarapriyamulu*, *ravipurajanalu*, *ratnasaru*, *kusumapurajanalu*, *guttulu*, *bal-guttulu*, *kasturi pattelu*, *ganda-saru*, *mandi gandaru*, *nagamallelu*, *tigamaleelu*, *krshnailalu*, *veluvadalu*, *manmadabanalu*, *maruvapu molakalu*, *sanna maigelu*, *junnubralu*, *ponnasrirajanalu*, *ponugurajanalu*, *mudupralu*, *arallu*, *muttusaru*, *sannastidulu*, *paccagannerulu*, *kodandaramulu*, *kausaru*, *rayasaru*, *candravankalu*, *jenisarulu*, *kambhojalu*, *vankalu*, *bodamalu*, *pongubralu*, *jilakararanalu*, *centapovulu*, *gorurajanalu*, *bodapralu*, *ram banalu*, *rekkamulu*, *vennamuddalu*, *chelambudamulu*, *dalwalu*, *gobbikayalu*, *palamigadalu*, *sirangalu*, *kaidaru*, *rekkapalalu*, *kakirekkalu*, *pushpa manjarulu*, *kanthisaru*, *gourikumkumulu*, *ranapendlikodukulu*, *pichchik gullu*, *prayagalu*, *gojjupralu*, *garudasaru*, *poyagantarajanalu*, *modugathodimalu*, *madukasaru*, *pachhasaru*, *reddipalavanchalu*, *sukhbabogulu*, *pachchakarpura sarulu*, *debbasalu*, *neerukavulu*, *gajukatteralu*, *kuradanalu*, *alugurajanalu*, *sambhavulu*, *avasadarulu*, *mohanapuserulu*, *manisarulu*, *masaru*, *mankenalu*, *pagadaputigalu*, *madipralu*, *devasaru*, *lattukabommulu*, *lakshmananoharalu*, *bharatissesalu*, *bhupurulu*, *vajrapatalukulu*, *vasara rajanalu*, *jivvajivankelu*, *gavvasaru*, *sampangipuwadlu*, *fajirajanalu*, *gamburajanalu*, *kannesarulu*, *tammipurajanalu*, *ammudikonegelzu*, *jeennvamukkalu*, *chilukamukkalu*, *edukarrulu*, *venkelu*, *isukarajanalu*, *puligollu*, *pogadasaru*, *jiltogalarajanalu*, *nalavarulu*, *tellachenangulu*, *nallachenangulu*, *divasaru*, etc.³ *Vysyapuranam*, *Ranganatha Ramayanam*, *Prabhandha Raja Venkateswara Vijaya Vilasamu* (17th C.) also give the names of the Paddy variety resembling the names given in the list of *Hamsavimsati*.

These lists contain the names of both superior and inferior varieties. It can be noted that there was sub-division among the main categories of Paddy. This lengthy list reveals that the traditional crops and the newly cultured crops also were cultivated in accordance with the needs of all classes of people and also in accordance with the suitability of soil in different regions. The *budumalu*, *kakirekkalu*, *gaurikumkumulu*, *ranapendlikodukulu*, *modugathodimalu* were the varieties of rice grown on dry lands. Some names seem to be the synonyms of the same variety. *Budumalu* was a coarse variety, looks black outward with its husk and the rice in it is red and might have been called as *Kakirekkalu*. Barbosa also referred to it as black rice, which was consumed by the poor.⁴

When crops failed due to heavy rains or draught, people took to short term crops. *Kalahastimahatmyamu* refers to *aravallu*, *gante*, *tavindiyalu* etc. which can be reaped in sixty day, which were produced under *etam* irrigation system. These were grouped under *sastikamulu*.⁵

Cooked rice had and still has a greater religious significance in Andhra culture.

The *bonalu* festival is celebrated every year in the month of *Ashadha*. Usually cooked rice along with curd is kept in the pots which were arranged in order of their size from the bottom to the top and is taken in a procession to the temple as an offering to the Mother – Goddess. This celebration is mentioned in *Gathasaptasati* as *Ghatanibandhana*, which is a Sanskrit word, including the description of the pots arranged to carry the *bonalu*.⁶ The word *bonalu* itself is a corrupt word for *bhojanalu*, a staple food of the people.

Manasollasa, describes the very idea of *annabhoga* in a royal cuisine which included *idili*, *dosa*, *vada*, *dahivada*, *poli*, which have a specific union of rice and other materials.⁷ A record from Cuddapah in the temple of Chennakesava mentions 'patra bhoga'.⁸ Some of the sweets like *appalu*, *ariselu*, *mandegalu*, *atirasalu* and *payasam*⁹ have an essential composition of the flour of rice". Thus, rice occupies a major place. Added, the water used to rinse and clean the rice was fermented was used as *kali*.

Rice Preparations:

Rice was the staple food of majority of the Telugu people. Plain boiled rice, *Krsara* and *Odana* were the most common items of main food prepared by the women of medieval Andhradesa. *Dasakumara Caritra* of Dandin in Sanskrit, which was later translated by Ketana in 14th C. A.D., describes the procedure of preparing the dish *odana* very vividly.¹⁰

The methods of preparing *pulahora*, the most favorite dish of the Telugu people can be found described in *Dasakumara Caritra*. *Gomini*, as the work tells us, first brayed the grains in a mortar (*ulukhala*) of *arjuna* wood having an upright hole, spacious, but not very deep, stirring it up again and again with her fingers, and striking it with a heavy pestle (*musala*) of *khadira* wood. She removed the grains of dust and the awn from the rice by winnowing it with a winnowing basket (*surpa*), and repeatedly rinsed it in pure water. She then worshipped the fireplace with offers of some grains, and poured the rice into boiling water which was five times the quantity of the rice grains. When the grains softened, hopped, and swelled, she lessened the heat of the fire and, fitting the lid to the kettle, passed the scum. She stirred the rice with a ladle, turned it a little, and when all the grains were evenly cooked, placed the kettle with its mouth downwards. The process detailed above has been set forth more precisely in the *Avantisundarikatha* in the description of the food, obviously rice, prepared by the expert cooks of the king Rajahamsa's kitchen. The work enumerates thirteen stages of cooking rice, each of them further involving a number of sub stages. The thirteen stages are: *sodhana*, refining, probably braying the grain in a mortar; *kalpana*, winnowing it to remove dust and the awn from it; *praksalana*, washing it with clean water; *pratistambhana*, pressing, probably pouring it in to hot water; *mardavakarana*, softening it or welling it in the boiling water; *siitakarana*, tempering the heat of the fire; *prasadana*, passing the scum of the grain out of the cooking utensil; *snehagrahana*, oiling or gheeing it; *varnakriya*, coloring it with turmeric; *gandhopsamhara*, fumigating it with aromatic spices, fried in boiling oil or ghee, or evaporated on the charcoals; *sadvargasampadana*, adding to it six kinds of flavors; *snehavicara*, sprinkling oil or ghee on it; and finally *pankti*, serving it to the partakers.¹¹

The dish called *krsara* (a gruel cooked by boiling rice with flesh and sesamum) generates the *kapha* and *pitta*. It imparts strength to the body and subdues the *vayu*. While *Bhavaprakasa* and *Astanga Sangraha* take *krsara* as a similar preparations like *kicadi* which is prepared by mixing the rice, pulses, salt, *sunthi* and *hingu* etc. *Yajnyavalkya Smriti* takes it as an *odana*. *Dalhana* clarifies the *krsara* as species of *yavagu* which is prepared by addition of *tila* (sesamum), pulses (*mudga*) and *tandula* (rice). *Srinatha Pandita* also referred to it but mentioned the mixed preparation of rice under the name of *odana*. Describing the different rice preparation he says that the rice prepared of the boiled de-husked paddy, well cleaned and filtered, is light, heavy, especially when taken after it has become cold. Rice prepared with meat, vegetable, muscle fat, oil, ghee, marrow, fruit, is strength promoting, refreshing, cardio tonic, heavy and nourishing, similar are the properties of rice prepared of *masa* (black gram), *tila* (sesamum) and *mudga* (green gram) and milk. In *Astanga Sangraha*, the rice prepared with mixing the meat is called *bhutodana*. *Odana* is nothing but a *biryani* of modern days. The word *biryani* is popularized during the Muslim rule. *Odana* is a vegetable *biryani*

and *bhutodana* is a non-vegetarian *biryani* of the ancient and medieval days.¹² The rice boiled and cooked with clarified butter and any kind of pulses, forms a rich and heavy food and was called as *pulagam*. According to scholars it helps to build up new tissues and imparts strength and rotundity to the body. We find many references in the contemporary literature and inscriptions to this variety of rice.¹³

Dadhyodana, was another variety of rice preparation, mostly used in religious offerings and which was distributed to the devotees.¹⁴

The staple food which was called as *annamu*, was prepared not only with paddy rice but also with *jowar*, *korra* and *sajja*, the cereals mostly cultivated in dry lands. Rice which was boiled in milk and added with jaggery or sugar and spices like cardamom and camphor was known as *payasam* or *paramannam*, the best food. Likewise, it was prepared with other cereals and sometimes added with pulses.¹⁵ Tenali Ramakrishna describes the varieties rice such as *abhinavodanam*, *dadhyodanam*, *ivurvantakam*, etc. He describes the process of cooking plain rice by exact measurements of rice and water.¹⁶ *Laja* was the fried rice used on auspicious occasions with wheat, *puris*, *puliyalu*, *angara* – *puliyalu* and *halwa* were prepared, the methods of which were explained in *Parahita Samhita* and many reference to them in the contemporary literary sources can be found.

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